

Traits of Successful Leaders

Harvard researcher says the most emotionally intelligent people have these 12 traits. Which do you have?

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What makes someone great at their job? Having knowledge, smarts and vision, to be sure. But what really distinguishes the [world's most successful leaders](#) is [emotional intelligence](#) — or the ability to identify and monitor emotions (of their own and of others).

Companies today are increasingly looking through the lens of emotional intelligence when hiring, promoting and developing their employees. [Years of studies](#) show that the more emotional intelligence someone has, the better their performance.

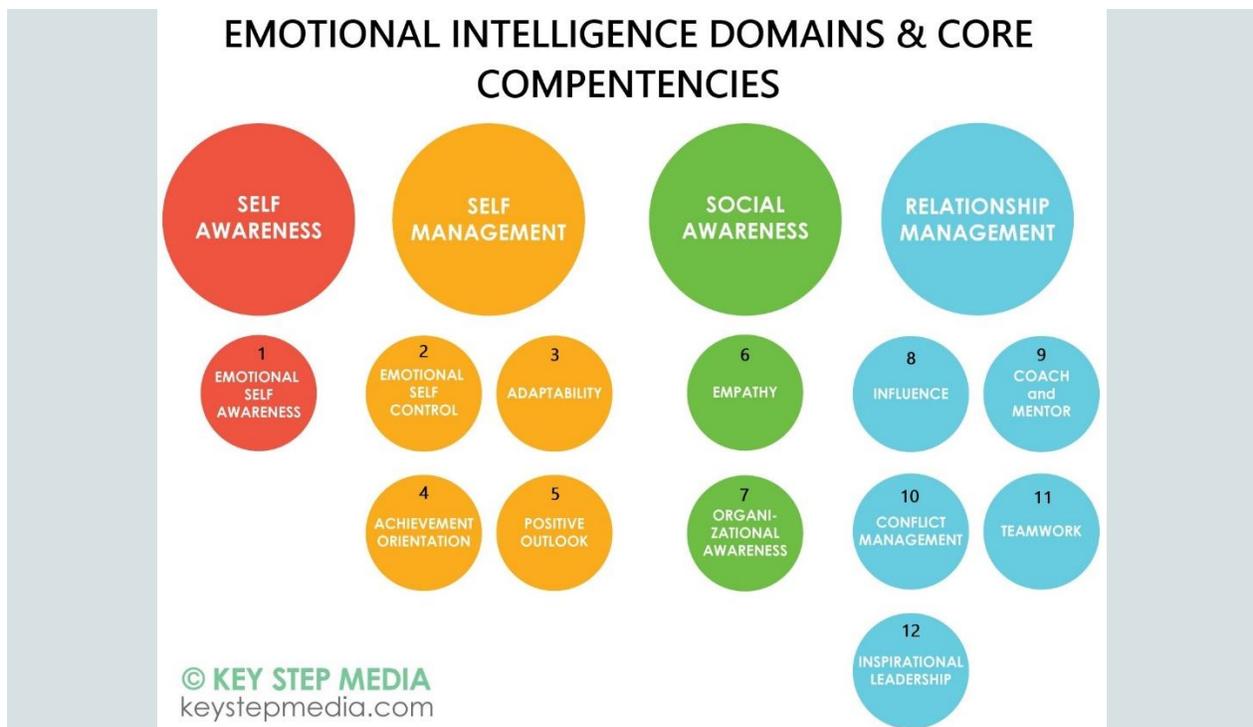
What most people fail to realize, though, is that mastering emotional intelligence doesn't come naturally. Tom, for example, considers himself an emotionally intelligent person. He's a well-liked manager who is kind, respectful, nice to be around and sensitive to the needs of others.

And yet, he often wonders, *I have all the qualities of emotional intelligence, so why do I still feel stuck in my career?*

This is a common trap: Tom is defining emotional intelligence too narrowly. By focusing on his sociability and likability, he loses sight of all other essential emotional intelligence traits he may be lacking — ones that can make him a stronger, more effective leader.

After spending 25 years [writing books and fostering research on this topic](#), I've found that emotional intelligence is comprised of four domains. And nested within these domains are 12 core competencies.

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Don't shortchange your development by assuming that emotional intelligence is all about being sweet and chipper. By [reviewing the competencies](#) below and doing an honest assessment of your strengths and weaknesses, you can better identify where there's room to grow.

1. Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the capacity to tune into your own emotions. It allows you to know what you are feeling and why, as well as how those feelings help or hurt what you're trying to do.

Do you have the core competency of [self-awareness](#)?

- **Emotional self-awareness:** You understand your own strengths and limitations; you operate from competence and know when to rely on someone else on the team. You also have clarity on your values and sense of purpose, which allows you to be more decisive when setting a course of action.

Developing the skills:

Every moment is an opportunity to practice self-awareness. One of the biggest keys is to acknowledge your weaknesses. If you're struggling with something at work, for example, be honest about the skills you need to work on in order to succeed.

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Be conscious of the situations and events in your life, too. During times of frustration, pinpoint the root and cause of your frustration. Think about any signals that accompany how you feel in that moment.

2. Self-management

Self-management is the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control. This is a powerful skill for leaders, especially during a crisis — because will people look to them for reassurance, and if their leader is calm, they can be, too.

*What core competencies of **self-management** do you have?*

- **Emotional self-control:** You stay calm under pressure and recover quickly from upsets. You know how to balance your feelings for the good of yourself and others, or for the good of a given task, mission or vision.
- **Adaptability:** This shows up as agility in the face of change and uncertainty. You're able to find new ways of dealing with fast-morphing challenges and can balance multiple demands at once.
- **Achievement orientation:** You strive to meet or exceed a standard of excellence. You genuinely appreciate feedback on your performance, and are constantly seeking ways to do things better.
- **Positive outlook:** You see the good in people, situations and events. This is an incredibly valuable competency, as it can build resilience and set the stage for innovation and opportunity.

Developing the skills:

During moments of distress, do not brood or panic. Take a deep breath and check in with your emotions. Instead of blowing up at people, let them know what's wrong and offer some solutions.

Accept that there will always be sudden changes and challenges in life. Try to understand the context of the given situation and adjust your strategy or priorities based on what is most important at the time.

3. Social awareness

Social awareness indicates accuracy in reading and interpreting other people's emotions, often through non-verbal cues. Socially aware leaders are able to relate to many different types of people, listen attentively and communicate effectively.

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*What core competencies of **social awareness** do you have?*

- **Empathy:** You pay full attention to the other person and take time to understand what they are saying and how they are feeling. You always try to put yourself in other people's shoes in a meaningful way.
- **Organizational awareness:** You can easily read the emotional currents and dynamics within a group or organization. You can sometimes even predict how someone on your team or leaders of a company you do business with might react to certain situations, allowing you to approach situations strategically.

Developing the skills:

First and foremost, social awareness requires good listening skills. Do not talk over someone else or try to hijack the agenda. Ask questions and invite others to do the same.

Challenging your prejudices and discovering commonalities is also key. Practice putting yourself in other people's shoes. When we do this, we are often more sensitive to what that person is experiencing and are less likely to tease, judge or bully them.

4. Relationship management

Relationship management is an interpersonal skill set that allows one to act in ways that motivate, inspire and harmonize with others, while also maintaining important relationships.

*Which core competencies of **relationship management** do you have?*

- **Influence:** You're a natural leader who can gather support from others with relative ease, creating a group that is engaged, mobilized and ready to execute the tasks at hand.
- **Coach and mentor:** You foster the long-term learning by giving feedback and support. You put your points into persuasive and clear ways so that people are motivated as well as clear about expectations.
- **Conflict management:** You're comfortable dealing with disagreements between multiple sides and can bring simmering disputes into the open and find win-win solutions.
- **Teamwork:** You interact well as a group member and can work with others. You participate actively, share responsibility and rewards, and contribute to the capability of your team as a whole.

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- **Inspirational leadership:** You inspire and guide others towards the overall vision. You always get the job done and bring out your team's best qualities along the way.

Developing the skills:

If you're a constantly negative person, you'll have a very difficult time managing long-term relationships. Instead of focusing on "the worst that can happen," try to see yourself as an agent of positive change.

Don't be afraid to go against the grain of conventional norms or take risks, either. These kinds of people ultimately leave the people they work with feeling inspired, motivated and connected.

***Daniel Goleman** is a psychologist and best-selling author of "Emotional Intelligence" and "Social Intelligence." His latest book is "What Makes a Leader: Why Emotional Intelligence Matters." Daniel received his PhD in psychology and personality development from Harvard University. His work has appeared in The New York Times and Harvard Business Review. Follow him on Twitter @DanielGolemanEI.*